Keeping Seafarers Fit for Duty: How Specialised Healthcare is Addressing Occupational Health Risks at Sea

The health of seafarers is closely linked to the safety of maritime operations. Extended periods at sea, physically demanding duties, irregular working hours and limited access to immediate medical assistance can increase the risk of fatigue, cardiovascular complications and respiratory concerns. As India strengthens its presence in the global maritime workforce, ensuring medical fitness and access to specialised healthcare is becoming an important industry priority.

Medical assessments play a critical role in identifying underlying health conditions before seafarers join vessels. Beyond routine physical examinations, these evaluations involve cardiovascular screening, vision and hearing assessments, respiratory investigations and laboratory tests. The Merchant Shipping (Medical Examination) Rules, 2026, further highlights the importance of structured medical evaluations and prescribed diagnostic investigations, increasing the need for specialised healthcare infrastructure.

Access to integrated diagnostic facilities is particularly important when seafarers need to complete multiple assessments before deployment. Addressing this requirement, MedRabbits Healthcare and Clinic has extended its services to maritime healthcare with DG Shipping certification to conduct mandatory pre-employment medical examinations for Merchant Navy officers and crew. Its Mumbai clinic combines consultations with laboratory investigations, ECG, TMT, X-ray, sonography and audiometry, supporting multiple medical assessments under one roof.

Comprehensive screening also requires facilities capable of evaluating cardiovascular, respiratory, visual and auditory health. In Delhi NCR, HealthChek Diagnostics provides specialised medical examinations for seafarers and maritime professionals. Its NABL-accredited facilities offer blood and urine investigations, ECG, TMT, pulmonary function testing, audiometry, X-ray and ultrasound, supporting the diagnostic requirements of maritime medical assessments.

Medical fitness also needs to be monitored throughout a seafarer's career rather than treated as a one-time recruitment requirement. Based in Visakhapatnam, Medwale Medical Centre provides pre-sea, periodic and pre-employment medical examinations for seafarers, along with certification and referral services. It also offers Offshore Energies UK medical assessments for offshore personnel, addressing occupational healthcare requirements across maritime and offshore sectors.

Healthcare access beyond pre-deployment assessments is equally important for professionals working away from shore. In Bengaluru, Shipcrew Medical Centre offers pre-employment, CDC and CoC, cruise-line, offshore and flag-state examinations, along with vaccinations. Its in-house laboratory and radiology facilities support investigations including ECG, TMT, 2D echo, audiometry and pulmonary function testing. The centre also provides telemedical support for seafarers at sea, extending healthcare access beyond shore-based examinations.

As India's maritime workforce expands, the focus on seafarer health must move beyond mandatory medical certification. Identifying health concerns early, strengthening diagnostic access and monitoring medical fitness throughout a seafarer's career are essential to occupational safety. Providers such as MedRabbits Healthcare, HealthChek Diagnostics, Medwale Medical Centre and Shipcrew Medical Centre reflect the growing importance of specialised healthcare in supporting a healthier and more resilient maritime workforce.